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Book Notes



by Walt
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Dan Beckman and Wallace Milam have completed *Secret Agendas*, a scathing indictment of the methods and conclusions espoused by Gerald Posner in *Case Closed*. A review of *Secret Agendas* will appear in our next issue, as their publication is set for May-June of this year. Dick Russell, author of *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, has published *Black Genius and the American Experience*; it is not JFK, but if it's Dick Russell, you know it is quality. Larry Sneed wrote us of his nearly completed manuscript, *No More Silence: An Oral History of the Assassination of President Kennedy*; the book is nearly 600 pages and includes approximately 140 previously unpublished photographs. Like the Milam-Beckman book, it will hopefully be available and reviewed by the time of the next issue. Tim Fattig, who has been very generous with his mailings of photos and scarce books to the journal, has one more trip to Dallas before his work is completed. From "across the pond," Allen Peppitt has completed "A Necessary End," which I had the pleasure to read. The work is something of a hybrid between *People v. Oswald*, in which Oswald remains alive to stand trial and Stanley Shapiro's *A Time to Remember* [see below], in which a time-traveller is crucial to the plot. When published, we expect to hear from our friends in England about this one.

Co-editor Jan Stevens is continuing work on his book on television and the assassination, and there is, of course, the long-awaited Oswald book by David Lifton -- still a work-in-progress.

Once and for all, I would like to take a few minutes to tell the famous "Random House" event.

In 1991, I decided on the *People v. Lee Harvey Oswald* concept, because it seemed like a different yet still reasonable approach, and because I felt it was difficult for anyone to prove a conspiracy until it had been *well* established that Oswald's guilt was not a foregone conclusion.

In a summer, 1991 conversation with Dave Lovett (of President's Box Book Shop), I asked him where I would shop a book of that genre, caught somewhere in the twilight between history, current events, and fiction. Dave said to try "at random." We had a chuckle when we realized it had become obvious that Random House fit that profile better than virtually anyone else.

Shortly thereafter, I wrote a letter to Random House, outlining the general idea that would be embodied in *People v.* and suggesting hopefully that they would be interested, since they had published a unique book on the JFK assassination (Shapiro's *A Time to Remember*).

A few days passed, and then I received a most attractive letter from Random House. Just looking at it, I knew it was not a routine rejection letter, which is just that: an impersonal, xeroxed formality.

I opened it carefully, noting the envelope was carefully typed. Inside, on embossed paper, was an equally carefully prepared letter from Robert Loomis, who would later become Posner's editor and confidante in *Case Closed*. Mr. Loomis's letter indicated that Random House would have no interest in publishing any material that contradicted the "official version" of the death of President Kennedy as espoused by the Warren Commission, and Mr. Loomis added that Shapiro's book was not a good call on my part, as they had not done well with that one. Inasmuch as it was made into a movie, I knew they weren't crying too loudly, so I knew I was being B.S.'ed.

The postscript, of course, is Posner. In his *Case Closed* world tour, Posner claimed that he had received a contract from Random House to write the "mother of all conspiracies" conspiracy book. However, his work had led him to believe that there was no conspiracy, so he reported that, and hoped Random House would stay with him.

Stay with him indeed. They published *Case Closed*, ran an ad branding researchers as traitors, and then redid their efforts with Mailer's *Oswald's Tale*, and even Posner's newest bit of garbage.

Got to find that letter.....